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SUBJECT: BENIN SUBMISSION FOR 2009 TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT

REF: STATE 132759

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) The Government of Benin (GoB) continued to make steady progress towards combating child trafficking. The police, gendarmes and judges described their efforts to suppress the practice through the investigation and the prosecution of traffickers during 2008. However, they were unable to provide statistics to back this assertion. Also, the government's failure to produce prosecution-related statistics makes it difficult to gage GoB progress against the practice of child trafficking.

¶2. (SBU) The National Child Protection Coordination and Monitoring Working Group (CNSCPE) now ensures a better dissemination of information related to child trafficking and protection among stakeholders and the general public by creating a website for that purpose.

3.(SBU) The Government of Benin has not yet started the implementation of the UNICEF sponsored National Policy and Strategy for Child Protection and the 2008-2012 National Plan to Combat Child Trafficking and Labor sponsored by the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor. The delay in the government's approval of the enabling decrees ("decrets d'application"), which creates the administrative procedures for the movement of children domestically and internationally, hampers the actual enforcement of Act No. 2006-04 relating to the Transportation of Minors and the Suppression of Child Trafficking in the Republic of Benin.

¶4. (SBU) The Government of Benin significantly increased the number of victims that it rescued and repatriated from other African countries and to whom it provided protection and assistance. It also notably augmented outreach campaigns to educate people on trafficking and strengthened its regional cooperation through experience sharing and participation in international forum on human trafficking.

¶5. (U) Embassy Cotonou's TIP POC is Christina Day, Political/Economic Officer, (229) 21-30-06-50, (229) 21-30-06-70 (fax). The approximate number of hours spent on this report was the following:

Political Assistant - 18 hours
Political Officer - 10 hours
Principal Officers - 4 hours

¶6. (U) The points below correspond to the numbering/lettering in reftel.

¶7. BENIN'S TIP SITUATION (Question 23)

¶A. Available sources of information on trafficking in persons are the Ministry of Family and National Solidarity; The Minors Protection Brigade (BPM) under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior and Public Security; and the Ministry of Justice, Legislation and Human Rights. The UNICEF sponsored National Policy and Strategy for Child Protection the 2008-2012 National Plan to Combat Child Trafficking and Labor sponsored by the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor, and the UNICEF sponsored National Survey on Child Trafficking also provide relevant and reliable information on child trafficking. The CNSCPE's website (www.cnscke.net) offers a wide range of information regarding child protection. National and International NGOs including Terre des Hommes, Salesian Sisters, Enfants solidaires d'Afrique et du Monde (ESAM), UNICEF, ILO's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC) are equally good source of information on the trafficking.

¶B. (SBU) Benin is a country of origin and transit for trafficked children. Although previously categorized as a destination country for trafficked children, recent information from various government and non-governmental sources indicate that while there are some foreign children trafficked to Benin, the total number does not

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appear to be significant. This evidence is anecdotal, but was consistent among different types of sources.

According to a draft of a 2005 ILO study (unpublished), almost 90 percent of Beninese children who are trafficked are trafficked internally. Of the children trafficked externally, the majority go to Nigeria (60 percent) with another contingent (20 percent) going to Gabon. The existing statistics on the extent of the trafficking problem are approximate, because findings of surveys conducted so far are partial or focus on a particular region of the country. However, according to the UNICEF sponsored National Survey on Child Trafficking published by the Ministry of Family and National Solidarity, the number of trafficked children aged 6-17 living in Benin during the six-month period (April-September 2006) covered by the study was 40,317 children, representing 2 percent of the population of Beninese children of that age range. Ninety-two percent (92 percent) are victims of internal trafficking. The trafficking concerned mostly girls (86 percent) and Beninese children (93 percent). Victims of domestic labor exploitation in the households where they were placed account for 43 percent. Victims came from poor families, and the majority of them did not receive formal education or were school drop-outs. They were mostly trafficked for domestic labor, vending, farming, and handicraft activities. They worked everyday and slept at their working place. They were ill-treated and underfed.

In the West African region, four main routes have been identified for child trafficking. Those are: the Benin-Nigeria-Cameroon-Gabon route; the Benin-Nigeria-Gabon route; the Benin-Togo-Nigeria-Gabon route; and the Benin-Niger-Libya route. Children are also trafficked to Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Congo and Guinea Bissau. Children were largely trafficked for labor (girls often to work as domestics in homes). Children ages 6-17 were trafficked, though more than 40 percent of trafficked children were over the age of 15. Internal trafficking largely brings children from rural areas to the urban south. According to a study conducted in July 2006 by Plan Benin, the first destination for internally trafficked children is Cotonou, the capital city of Benin (53,3 percent) followed by Parakou (11 percent) and Porto-Novo (8,7 percent). The majority of externally trafficked children go to Nigeria (60,8 percent), followed by Cote d'Ivoire (20 percent) and then Gabon (4,4 percent).

¶C. (SBU) The continuing motivation for child trafficking in Benin

remains economic conditions coupled with the traditional system of "vidomegon." Traditionally, vidomegon children are sent to live with richer relatives, usually in urban areas, to provide them with better opportunities (work, school, training, or just more food). This practice has led to labor exploitation and the vulnerability of young girls to increased sexual exploitation. Parents who allow their children to be trafficked often believe it is an economic necessity and/or will provide a better life for their children. The employers of trafficking victims include farmers, traders, handicraftsmen, owners of small industries, and civil servants. Polygamy, illiteracy, forced marriage, non registration of birth, corruption, and HIV/AIDS also account for child trafficking in Benin. Children who are trafficked internationally are often transported by car or boat.

¶D. (SBU) According to the UNICEF sponsored National Survey on Child trafficking, most of internal trafficking victims are girls (89.7 percent). Transnational trafficking involves 48 percent of girls and 52 percent of boys. Children living in the northern regions of Benin are more vulnerable to trafficking.

¶E. (SBU) Traffickers are often members of the community and/or relatives. They may also be formerly trafficked children who have returned to their village and find work by trafficking other children. Trafficked children generally come from poor rural areas and are deceitfully promised educational opportunities or other incentives.

¶8. THE GOVERNMENT OF BENIN'S ANTI-TIP EFFORTS (Question 24)

¶A. (SBU) The government acknowledges that child trafficking is a problem in Benin.

¶B. (SBU) The Ministry of Family and National Solidarity is the lead

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agency for anti-trafficking efforts. The Ministry of Justice, Legislation and Human Rights and the Ministry of Interior and Public Security are also very involved. Other ministries are somewhat involved, including the Ministry of Labor and Civil Service and the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Integration, Francophonie and the Beninese Diaspora handles transnational trafficking cases.

¶C. (SBU) Resource limitations remain a major obstacle for the government to address the problem of trafficking. The Ministry of Family and National Solidarity (the lead agency for trafficking) has had serious resource limitations that hinder its efforts. The Ministries of Justice and Interior (judicial system and police) also suffer from limited resources. Police officers and community leaders regularly complain they lack funds to buy essential resources, such as vehicle fuel, needed to investigate trafficking cases.

Benin has only eight courts of first instance, where trafficking cases are heard, and the courts struggle to complete their yearly caseload. This leads to extensive pre-trial detention in many cases and a lack of manpower to conduct thorough investigations. The Minors Protection Brigade, a specialized unit in the Ministry of the Interior that deals with children's issues, is a dynamic but still small and under-funded unit.

Resource limitations also prevent the government from taking a larger role in helping victims, though the government does have a referral system in place to ensure care for victims of trafficking by NGOs.

¶D. (SBU) The government established the National Child Protection and Monitoring Working Group (CNSCPE) to monitor its anti-trafficking efforts. The government tasked the National Commission for Children's Rights and the National Commission for Human Rights, both part of the Ministry of Justice, with assessing anti-trafficking activities. In March 2008, the Government of Benin presented a comprehensive report on the activities it carried out to fight human trafficking in the framework of the ECOWAS Action Plan. The Ministry of Justice periodically collects child trafficking statistics and delivers them to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and

the Benin Press Agency for circulation. The Minors Protection Brigade (BPM) has a new child trafficking database called "Enfants du Benin" (Benin's Children) that will help tracking and processing child trafficking cases. The BPM's data base is functional though further training of BPM's personnel is required before it can be used fully. The Family and Child Watchdog Office (OFFE) at the Ministry of Family and National Solidarity also maintains a database on child trafficking. In 2008, the EU Cooperation and Technical Assistance Bureau (BCAT) assisted the Ministry of Family and National Solidarity in creating a website for the CNSCPE to centralize and disseminate comprehensive information on child protection. The CNSCPE issues a quarterly newsletter to provide stakeholders with information on activities that it carries out to advance child protection and welfare. Nevertheless, some actors believe that the CNSCPE does not work at its full potential.

19. INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF TRAFFICKERS (Question 25)

1A. (SBU) On April 5, 2006, during his first day in office, President Yayi signed into law Act No. 2006-04 relating to the Transportation of Minors and the Suppression of Child Trafficking in the Republic of Benin. The law contains a comprehensive definition of trafficking ("traite") and applies to children trafficked both internally and externally. It enumerates several types of prohibited exploitation including all forms of slavery, debt servitude, forced or obligatory labor, use of children in armed conflict, for organ donation, for prostitution, in pornography, for illegal activities, and for any work that is harmful to a child's safety, health, or well-being. It punishes both traffickers and accomplices. The law reinforces an existing law stipulating that all children must have an identity document to enter Benin and special written authorization to exit Benin if not accompanied by their parents. The law can punish transportation providers for not checking for this documentation.

The provisions of the law referring to the requirements for the movement of children require the issuance of enabling decrees ("decrets d'application"), which create the administrative

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procedures for the movement of children domestically and internationally. In 2007, the National Child Protection and Monitoring Working Group drafted and amended the three decrees which will regulate the movement of minors domestically and internationally. However, after considering the decrees in 2008, the Council of Ministers sent them back to the Ministry of Family and National Solidarity and requested amendments to bring them into line with Act No. 2006-04 related to the Transportation of Minors and the Suppression of Child Trafficking in the Republic of Benin. This situation delays the full application of the anti-child trafficking legislation.

Parents who aid traffickers may receive a term of imprisonment of three months to two years. Anyone transporting a child within the country without appropriate documentation can be punished with six to eighteen months imprisonment and a 50,000 - 300,000 FCFA fine (USD 100 - 600). Illegally transporting a child outside Benin is punishable by one to three years imprisonment and a 500,000 - 1,500,000 FCFA fine (USD 1,000 - 3,000).

Under the law, trafficking is punishable by ten to fifteen years imprisonment. Punishment increases to ten to twenty years if the trafficking is aggravated by fraud, abuse, violence, rape or other aggression, or if the child cannot be recovered. If a trafficked child dies, the trafficker can receive life in prison. The law also punishes employers who are aware their employee is trafficked with three months to a year in prison and/or a 200,000 - 1,000,000 FCFA fine (USD 400 - 2,000). Attempted trafficking carries the same punishment as trafficking. Subsequent offenses will double the applicable punishment, and accomplices are subject to the same penalties as traffickers. The child trafficking law does not cover adults who are trafficked, but there are existing laws against kidnapping that can provide protection to adults. Other laws that cover child trafficking include the December 11 Constitution of the Republic of Benin; the Penal Code; Act No 98-004 on Labor in the Republic of Benin; Act No 2003-04 of April 3, 2003 on Sexual and Reproductive Health; Act No 2003-03 of March 2003 on the repression

of the practice of Female Genital Mutilation; Act 2002-07 of June 14 on the Code of Persons and Family; Act 2006-19 of September 5, 2006 related to the repression of Sexual Harassment and the Protection of Victims in the Republic of Benin.

1B. (SBU) As stated above, penalties for those who traffic children for sexual exploitation include ten to twenty years imprisonment. Additionally, under the penal code, individuals involved in child prostitution, including those who facilitate and solicit it, face imprisonment of two to five years and fines of 2000 USD to 20,000 USD (1,000,000 to 10,000,000 FCFA). Under the penal code those who facilitate adult prostitution and individuals who profit financially from adult prostitution, including traffickers and brothel owners, face penalties including imprisonment of six months to two years and fines of 800 USD to 8,000 USD (400,000 to 4,000,000 FCFA) depending on the severity of the offence.

1C. (SBU) Penalties for labor exploitation, the predominant reason for child trafficking in Benin, depend on whether or not aggravating factors are involved. Exploiting children for labor can be prosecuted under different statutes in Benin including the Constitution, the Family and Persons Code, the Penal Code, the Labor Code, the General Collective Convention on Labor, the Social Code, case law, and a wide range of other legislation and government decrees. In addition to the penalties for child trafficking, those who engage in labor exploitation of both adults and children may be prosecuted under the Labor Code. The penalties for violations of the labor code include imprisonment of two months to one year and/or fines of 280 USD to 700 USD (140,000 to 350,000 FCFA).

1D. (SBU) The penalty for rape is 1 - 5 years incarceration, though the penalties can increase depending upon the age of the victim (the most severe penalties for children under the age of 13) and the extent of the assault. Many recent rape cases have received up to twenty years in prison, depending on the circumstances.

1E. (SBU) During January and February 2008, the Minor Protection Brigade (BPM) arrested six child traffickers. On August 7, 2008 in the commune of Materi, northern Benin, security forces arrested a trafficker who attempted to cross the Benin-Burkina Faso border with

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three children destined for labor exploitation in Burkina Faso. The BPM brought a total of 58 individuals involved in child trafficking to the Court of Cotonou. [NOTE: These statistics do not include those made by other branches of the Beninese police force. Comprehensive arrest figures are not available. END NOTE]

During an October 2008 visit to courts and to gendarmes in central and northern Benin, judges and gendarmes told Post that they had handled child trafficking cases during the year. However, they were unable to provide statistics on arrests, prosecutions and convictions of offenders. The Office of Civil and Penal Affairs under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice, Legislation and Human Rights has failed to provide Post with statistics on the prosecutions of child traffickers, because its lacks money to fund the collection of those data from the eight courts of Benin. (NOTE: Post sent the Ministry of Justice a diplomatic note to ask for prosecutions statistics and to outline the importance of such statistics in the assessment of the government's fight against the trafficking. To date, the Ministry of Justice has not responded. END OF NOTE)

1F. (SBU) Unlike in 2007, the GOB did not provide a specialized training for government officials on how to recognize, investigate and prosecute instances of trafficking during the period covered by the report. However, senior police officers are familiarized with child trafficking issues as part of their training in the police academy.

1G. (SBU) The government cooperates with other governments on trafficking investigations and prosecutions. Benin and Nigeria signed a Cooperation Agreement on the Prevention, Repression and Elimination of Trafficking in Persons (in particular women and children) on June 9, 2005. The Joint Nigeria-Benin Committee to Combat Child Trafficking meets on a regular basis (twice a year).

The committee met on November 3-5, 2008 in Lagos, Nigeria to discuss child-trafficking issues and to draft a 2008-2009 Joint Action Plan on country response to trafficking in persons, particularly in Women and Children. This meeting was part of the joint special plan of action drafted by Benin and Nigeria to stop the trafficking of children from Zakpota, Benin, to Abeokuta, Nigeria. The committee met with the board of the Association of the Beninese Community in Abeokuta that plays an important part in the identification, interception and repatriation of Beninese children who are trafficked to stone quarries in Abeokuta. According to Terre des Hommes, a Swiss NGO that takes the lead in the repatriation and shelter of Beninese victims from Abeokuta's quarries in Nigeria, the Beninese Ministry of Family, the BPM in conjunction with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic In Persons and Other Related Offences (NAPТИP) and the Beninese consulate in Nigeria repatriated 55 trafficked victims from February to September, 2008. From March 3 to April 4, 2008 delegates from Mali visited Benin to share experience with the BPM.

IH. (SBU) Anecdotal evidence indicates that traffickers (for example, from Nigeria) intercepted at the border are handed over to the other country's authorities without a formal extradition process. However, under the June 2005 Benin - Nigeria cooperation agreement on child trafficking, a trafficker may either be prosecuted in the country where he/she is arrested or extradited to his/her country of origin.

II. (SBU) There is no direct evidence of government involvement in trafficking, and tolerance among government officials for trafficking seems to be lessening. Given the societal tolerance for the practice of vidomegon, however, many government officials were themselves vidomegon children, and are resistant to the idea that vidomegon could be improper. At the same time, however, an increasing number of local officials are becoming aware of the problems and hardships associated with trafficking and are differentiating the traditional practice of "vidomegon" from the crime of child trafficking.

IJ. (SBU) The embassy is not aware of any arrests or prosecutions of government officials for trafficking in persons crimes.

IK. (SBU) Prostitution in Benin is not in and of itself a criminal offense. Under the penal code there are no penalties imposed on

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prostitutes; however, those who facilitate prostitution and individuals who profit financially from prostitution, including traffickers and brothel owners, face penalties including imprisonment of six months to two years and fines of 800 USD to 8,000 USD (400,000 to 4,000,000 FCFA) depending on the severity of the offence. Individuals involved in prostitution with minors under the age of 18, including those who facilitate and solicit it, face imprisonment of two to five years and fines of 2000 USD to 20,000 USD (1,000,000 to 10,000,000 FCFA).

IL. (SBU) The embassy is not aware of any accusations that Beninese troops participating in international peacekeeping missions engaged in trafficking while deployed abroad.

IM. (SBU) Benin has no identified problem of child tourists coming to the country. However, there are credible reports that tourists visiting the Pendjari National Park in northern Benin use the service of under aged prostitutes. It is not clear whether these tourists operate through a local or an international network, or whether they come to the region primarily for sex tourism.

10. PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS (Question 26)

IA. (SBU) The Ministry of Family and National Solidarity, Ministry of Interior (Minors Protection Brigade), Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and various international donors and NGOs have developed a system to assist and repatriate (and/or reintegrate) victims of child trafficking. The Minors Protection Brigade (BPM) generally takes initial custody of trafficked children who are already inside Benin. After an initial interview to ascertain if the child is a victim of trafficking, the victim is referred to one of a

network of NGO shelters. The BPM brings charges against the traffickers if there is enough evidence, and the NGO works with the Ministry of Family and National Solidarity to reunite children with their families. This process can take some time, depending on the circumstances. Each child is treated individually, and is not sent back to his/her community of origin until there is someplace for him/her to go (either back to school, into vocational training or an apprenticeship, or other "reinsertion"). The government also uses the Ministry of Family and Children's network of "Social Promotion Centers" (Centres de Promotion Social (CPS)) to provide basic social services in each of Benin's 77 communes, including for trafficking victims. Each commune (municipality) has its own center with a local representative and a social protection committee. During 2008, the GOB repatriated a total of 172 trafficking victims from western and central Africa and proceeded with their reintegration.

1B. (SBU) The Ministry of Family and National Solidarity collaborates closely with NGOs and other donors who provide services to child victims. Typically, the government refers children to NGO-run shelters. However, the Minors Protection Brigade has a government-built shelter on its premises that is fully equipped to handle up to 160 children (80 boys and 80 girls). This is intended as a transit facility for recovered trafficking victims where children will stay while their cases are processed prior to placement in a long-term shelter. The BPM's Shelter (Centre d'Accueil et de Transit) became operational in May 2007. It is temporarily staffed with 7 personnel provided by three local anti-child trafficking entities. During the period covered by the report, the BPM's shelter took care of 222 victims. According to the regulations of the center, trafficked children should not stay longer than one week. However, the shelter often keeps victims beyond this limit of time before handing them over to NGOs' shelters for reintegration. The BPM's shelter offered victims legal, medical and psychological assistance.

1C. (SBU) The Ministry of Family and National Solidarity collaborates closely with NGOs and other donors that provide services to child victims. The Ministry of Family and National Solidarity is one of the most under-funded ministries in the government. Nevertheless, it has signed partnership agreements with international and local NGOs and facilitates their funding by donors.

1D. (SBU) The Government of Benin provides assistance to foreign trafficking victims before proceeding with repatriation in their respective home countries.

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1E. (SBU) (See paragraph B)

1F. (SBU) The Ministry of Family and National Solidarity maintains a network of social welfare centers (CPS) at the municipal (commune) level, which provide assistance to the victims of child trafficking. A Ministry of Family and National Solidarity employee at the departmental level (each roughly equivalent to a state) supervises each center. The centers have had a varied amount of success in stopping trafficking

1G. (SBU) On November 18, 2008, the Government of Cameroon in conjunction with the GOB arranged the return to Benin of 21 Beninese who were rescued from the shipwreck that occurred off the coast of Londji in Cameroon. Among those were 9 trafficked children who the BPM sent to shelters for reintegration. During the year, in cooperation with the concerned countries, the brigade rescued 222 trafficking victims en route to and from the following countries: Nigeria, Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Mali, and the Republic of Congo.

1H. (SBU) The government does not have a mechanism for screening for trafficking victims among those engaged in the commercial sex trade.

1I. (SBU) As noted above, almost all identified trafficking victims in Benin are children. The rights of these victims are respected, and they are not treated as criminals.

IJ. (SBU) Victims are encouraged to assist in the investigation and prosecution of traffickers, but this is complicated by the fact that most victims are children. The protection of child victims is guaranteed during the judicial process. The Minors Protection Brigade reports it is sometimes unable to get all the facts in a case without subjecting victims to more trauma. Child trafficking victims do not take part in their trafficker's trial unless the judge requires it for a specific purpose. Parents and members of the community are reluctant to bring charges against traffickers. However, with the new anti-child trafficking law the government can prosecute traffickers without the consent of the parents or victimized child. There is no victim restitution program.

IK. (SBU) The government did not provide specialized training for its officials during the period covered by the report. (See paragraph F, section on Investigation and Prosecution)

IL. (SBU) The Ministry of Family and National Solidarity works with NGOs and donors to provide shelter and helps to reintegrate victims of trafficking into their communities. For example, the Ministry (in conjunction with UNICEF) has a vocational school pilot program that trains children in a trade. The Ministry also tries to work with schools to reintegrate children, and maintains contact with the schools to follow up on children to prevent them from being trafficked again.

The government works closely with civil society on trafficking issues. UNICEF takes the lead among international organizations and has a close working relationship with the government. Given Benin's resource limitations, the government relies heavily on and cooperates closely with NGOs to provide many services in the area of child trafficking. On October 23, 2007, the EU launched a Cooperation and Technical Assistance Bureau (BCAT) consisting of 4 locally recruited employees and one expatriate worker. This entity is to provide the Ministry of Family and National Solidarity with technical assistance in the area of child protection through a 4-year action plan. Its objectives include strengthening the institutional capabilities of the ministry, coordinating with other actors involved in the fight against child trafficking, and assessing the government's progress in curbing trafficking. In 2008, the BCAT, in conjunction with the Ministry of Secondary Education, Technical and Vocational Training, established centers in the international market of Dantokpa in Cotonou, and in the markets of Parakou and Malanville to make victims feel more secure and to provide them with vocational training for a successful reintegration.

IM. (SBU) UNICEF, ILO, the European Union, DANIDA, the French Embassy, French Volunteers, Terre des Hommes, Silesian Sisters,

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Catholic Relief Services, World Education and a large group of other international and local organizations work with trafficking victims. They provide awareness campaigns, shelters, training, and other services to victims. Although there is a discernible growth in political will and awareness among national officials to address trafficking issues, at times some local authorities are reluctant to cooperate. Local NGOs are working successfully at the local level by enlisting the help of Parents' Associations in schools and community-level social protection committees mentioned above.

II. PREVENTION (Question 27)

IA. (SBU) From October 2006 to December 2008, a total of 177,850 people including transporters, members of Local Committees to combat child trafficking, teachers, local authorities, law enforcement agents, social workers and religious leaders were sensitized to the trafficking through the USAID and UNICEF funded project "on combating child trafficking through an integrated approach". The project targeted northern communities. The Office of Childhood and Adolescence at the Ministry of Family coordinated this effort.

IB. (SBU) Agents of the Minors Protection Brigade screen travelers at some of Benin's border crossings. Border agents and gendarmes monitor the borders for trafficking victims and have had some success in arresting traffickers and returning trafficked children.

They also rely on community whistleblowers to draw their attention to suspicious cases involving the transportation of children along border routes.

IC. (SBU). There is now a mechanism to coordinate and facilitate communication between the various actors on child trafficking related matters. By presidential directive dated March 15, 2006 (order No 503/MFPSS/SGM/SPEA/SA), the then Ministry of Family and Children put in place a National Child Protection and Monitoring Working Group (CNSCPE). This body, which meets quarterly and is made up of representatives from government agencies, national and international NGOs, and development partners, is tasked with centralizing all information related to child protection activities, assuring the coordination and monitoring of stakeholder activities, and proposing solutions to the problems these actors face. The task force established four technical committees to study specific issues regarding child protection: "Trafficking and Exploitation", "Juvenile Justice", "Violence and Harmful Practices Affecting Children" and, "Orphans and Vulnerable Children". In addition to elaborating terms of reference and annual work plans of their activities, committee members meet on a quarterly basis to discuss specific issues pertaining to their areas of responsibility. The Watchdog to Combat Corruption (OLC) serves as a public corruption task force. It has a National Strategic Plan to Combat Corruption intended for government officials, NGOs, and ordinary citizens.

ID. (SBU) The government completed drafting and editing of the UNICEF sponsored National Policy and Strategy for Child Protection in October 2007. This policy document centers on a number of principles intended to provide coherence, focus and direction to all activities undertaken by the government regarding the prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration of vulnerable children. Currently, the government is expected to budget for the activities planned in the document to have it actually implemented. The 2008-2012 National Plan to Combat Child Trafficking and Labor, funded by the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor is already printed and the government plans to popularize it. In 2007, the government released also a Children's Code that brings together all legislation and decrees pertaining to child welfare and assures that they respect the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The document defines the legal framework needed to protect children in the criminal, social, and administrative arenas. The measures defined in the code also seek to tackle issues including children's social reintegration, repatriation, rehabilitation, and vocational training.

IE. (SBU) Non applicable

IF. Post is not aware of any measures taken by the Government of Benin to reduce the participation in international child sex tourism by nationals of the country.

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IG. (SBU) The Beninese troops that are deployed abroad as part of peacekeeping missions are trained through the Department of State's African Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) program. The training provides them with strict rules to follow in the field to avoid involvement in trafficking and exploitation.

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